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ON PRAAYER

---BY---

Rt. Rev. Alex. Macdonald, D. D.,

Bishop of Victoria, B.C. (Roman Catholic)

*a fine & good man
see Rev. C. T. Scott*



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ON PRAYER

By Rt. Rev. Alex. Macdonald, D.D., Bishop of Victoria, B.C.

Prayer is the communion of the soul with God. We can commune only with the known. God is known by the light of reason, as well as by the higher light of revelation. It is this higher light that we are to consider our subject. The prayer that "availeth much," the prayer that saves (Jas. 5: 15, 16) rests on divine faith as its foundation. But it has two supports in nature itself. One is the witness of reason to the being of a God; the other is the witness of history to the fact of a divine revelation. If either of these should fail, faith would be put in jeopardy, and prayer would be vain. If there were no God, where would be the use of speaking boldly into the void? If God cared so little for man as to hold Himself aloof in His high Heaven, where would be the sense of trying to commune with Him? It is needful, therefore, to look to these supports of prayer in the order of nature, and to establish them firmly.

The existence of God is borne in upon the mind by a four-fold consideration: the witness of the human race in all lands and in all ages, the evidences of design in the world around us; the need of a first cause to account for the origin of things; the need of a Sovereign Lawgiver to account for the existence of the moral law of which conscience is the herald. I will state briefly these four proofs.

First, there is the testimony of mankind. The poet voices it when he sings:—

Father of all! in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

Never was there a race of men on this earth but held, in some form, belief in a Supreme Being. This belief is a rational conviction. It is rooted in the reason of man. It is only reason that could beget it, for none of the senses can perceive the being of a God. This belief, too, bears about it all the tokens of truth. It is universal. Not only the untutored and the un-

lettered, but the brightest intellects of all time and the greatest philosophers have held it with the firmest grasp. Despite the efforts of individuals to uproot it from the minds of men, it has persisted and still persists. Error may live for a time, but sooner or later it is unmasked and hastes to hide itself in some corner. Truth alone is eternal; truth alone can bear the keen shafts of human reason, and grow all the stronger and shine all the brighter for the attempts made to beat it down and quench it. Finally, this belief has wrought most potently for good. It has ever been the life and soul of morality, the prop and sure stay of every virtue that ennobles man. Without it no society would be secure, no law would have binding force in conscience, and brute force would reign in all the world. Suppose it to be erroneous, then is error the fountain source of untold blessings to the human race, and man owes homage to falsehood, not to truth.

Nor does it take away from the force of our argument that men have had false notions of God; that pagans believe in a plurality of gods. This does but show that the light of reason, enfeebled and obscured since the Fall, does not in all cases reveal clearly what the nature of God is, though it witnesses to His existence. Moreover, while the pagans of old worshipped many gods, one was always supreme; and the greatest minds among them, such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, held that there was only one God, the First Cause and Prime Mover of all things.

This testimony of mankind to the existence of God is a striking and impressive argument. But it is backed by others which are still more cogent, because intrinsic and founded in the nature of things. Anyone who looks out into the world around him may trace in it the footprints of the Creator. On every hand there is order and harmony; everywhere law reigns. But this order points to an Intelligence, a Mind that planned it; this law implies a Lawgiver. "Nor can God Himself," writes Cicero, "Who is revealed to our understanding, be conceived of but as Mind, unfettered and free, segregated from matter and from all that is mortal, knowing all things, moving all things, Himself endowed with deathless activity" (*Tusulan Disputations*, bk. 1:27, 66). Matter itself is devoid of intelligence, is blind; it cannot, therefore, be the cause of the order that we discern in it. It is passive, it does but obey the law; it cannot,

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therefore, be the source of the law. What we call the laws of nature are such in the sense that nature is subject to them, and because subject, therefore not the source of them. The earth which turns daily on its axis, and revolves yearly round the sun, without swerving by a hair's breadth from its orbit, does but blindly obey the law impressed on it by Him who guides the planets in their course.

Again, on every hand we find evidences of design in the formation of things. Everything is adapted to some end; everything serves a purpose, hidden though that purpose may be at times from us. The sun sheds its light and warmth upon the earth for the life of man and beast and all things that grow. The eye is made to see, and the ear to hear, and made with wondrous art. Whence this art but from some consummate Artist? The material universe in which we trace this art is but as clay in the potter's hand. Whence this design, this adaptation of means to an end, but from some Designer, some Mind that shaped things and fashioned them for a purpose? Every blade of grass that sprouts out of the ground, every leaf that unfolds itself upon the tree, every flower that blooms and sends forth its fragrance points by its make and texture and finish to that great Artist who fashioned all things, and furnished the one perfect pattern which human art can at the best but faintly copy.

Let us take this argument from design in a concrete case. Consider the busy bee. This little creature extracts honey from flowers, gets wax as a sort of by-product, and with it builds its hive. The first bee that ever appeared on the earth must have been provided with an apparatus for sipping honey. Why so? Because honey is the food on which it lives, and whence it gets the material for building its store-room. The pretence that the need could create the faculty can have no place here, for the procuring of necessary food and the building of a place to store it in would brook no delay. And so the faculty must have existed before the first bee felt the first pangs of hunger. Whence, then, this apparatus so skilfully fashioned that of all living creatures the bee alone can make honey, even man, with his inventive genius, being unable to devise a means of making it? Not from the bee; for, while the bee makes honey, the first bee could not have made itself. Not from chance, because no living creature gets its food and material for building itself a house by mere chance. Moreover, every bee has this apparatus which enables

it to make a judicious selection of a certain element in flowers out of the many elements that are there; and what is one and the same in all the individuals of a species comes not by hap, but by design. Here, indeed, is Natural Selection, but not the Darwinian; for it is the bee, and not Nature in the general, that makes the selection; it is not the species that is selected, but the food that it feeds on.

Consider, again, the bee's hive. It is made with marvellous art. Speaking broadly, it is so constructed that with the minimum of material you have the maximum of capacity. To plan such a structure man would have to work out a very difficult mathematical problem—a problem that must have been worked out for every bee before it was born. No bee ever went about the task of building its hive at haphazard. Without having—hid away somewhere in its little brain—a plan of the hive, it would but waste much wax and build nothing. So, man himself never achieves anything without a plan and a fixed purpose. He may, indeed, pull down, but he will never build up. If he sets himself to make a house without a plan, he will spoil much material and labour in vain. But who forms the plan of his own house. Who, then, formed that of the bee's? Not the bee itself, because it lacks intelligence. If the bee, out of its own head, made the plan of its hive, it could make other plans as well. And one of the very first things we should expect it to do would be to contrive some means of saving its honey from predatory man. The bee, then, is not the architect of its own house. It does but faithfully carry out the plan given to it by the Architect of the universe; just as men who are not themselves able to make plans carry out the plans of others.

There is yet another reason for affirming the existence of God. Many things in the world begin to be, and for a time, and pass away. Plainly these things receive their existence when they begin to be from that which already exists. If that, in its turn, derives its existence from something else, we are as far off as ever from any explanation of their origin. So, we must come at last to some Being which has within itself the reason of its existence; which is uncaused; which does not begin to be, but always is, self-existent, necessary, and eternal.

Two or three hundred years ago there was not a single one in existence of all the myriads of living creatures that now people the earth. Whence have they come? Life can come only from

that which lives. They came from other living creatures, and these in their turn from others still. But this must stop somewhere; the process cannot be carried to infinity. To suppose an infinite series of living beings, each taking its origin from the other, is to suppose a series in which there is no first. For, if first there be, then, since there is a last, between the first and the last there can be but a finite number, however great. But if there is no first, there can be no second, no third, no last. Since, therefore, there is a last link in the living chain, there must needs be a first, and the series must consequently be finite. Even if it could be carried to infinity, we should have an infinite series of living things each having an origin, and that origin by the very terms of the question outside the series.

And as there must be an uncaused First Cause, so there must be a Prime Mover. The things of the material universe have for twin constituents matter and energy. But it is the nature of matter to fetter and tie down the energy that is linked with it. And so material energy is primarily potential, not kinetic or active. It has to be roused into activity. As all the energy in the material universe is of this nature, it follows that the first material agency which started to operate in the universe must have been stirred into activity by an Agent not of the material order.

Lastly, there is such a thing as right and wrong in human conduct; some acts are morally bad, others morally good. This is implied in the laws of all nations; it is proclaimed in the language and literature of every people; it is attested by the conscience of every individual, for "conscience doth make cowards of us all." Whence is this moral law? Is man himself its author? Has man created the distinction between right and wrong? What man has made man can unmake, but no man can make that which is right to be other than right, or that which is wrong to be other than wrong. Besides, man is the subject of this law; man obeys it; man cannot, therefore, be the author of it. The law is within him, whether he will or no. His conscience tells him that he ought to do what is right, and witnesses against him when he does what is wrong, even if no one knows of that wrong but himself. This law, then, which is written in the conscience of every man, must come from One who is above man, who is man's Lord and Master, the Moral Governor of the universe,

through whom earthly rulers hold sway and earthly law-givers dispense justice.

Thus reason itself tells us that there is a God. It also witnesses that God has made a revelation of truths above the order of nature. The Bible, viewed simply as an historical document, contains what purports to be a revelation from God to man. And the divine character of this revelation is attested by prophecy and miracle. In the Book of Genesis, after the fall of our first parents, we have a clear intimation that there was to be born of the woman One who should crush the serpent's head. Henceforth He is known as the Expected of the nations; and the line of prophecy is as a trail of light which grows ever brighter as Shiloh draws nigh. Let me take a single prophecy and its fulfilment.

It was revealed to Jacob that the sceptre should not pass from Judah till Shiloh came. As the sceptre is the symbol of the ruling power, this means that the control of its own political destiny should be with the tribe of Judah till the coming of the Messiah. David was the first king of the tribe. The kingly power passed from his house, but the power of self-government did not pass from Judah, which continued to choose its own ruler till the time of Herod the Great. And even though Herod, an Idumean by birth, was by the Romans thrust upon the Jews, the latter did not lose the power of governing themselves. But their power now was tottering to its fall. Herod and all Jerusalem with him felt and feared this when word was brought that the Christ, the rightful heir to the throne of David His father, was born in Bethlehem of Judah, according to the prophecy. Thirty-odd years slip by, and we find a Roman named Pilate, Governor of Judea, and the Christ, the King of the Jews, standing before his tribunal. "Shall I crucify your King?" Pilate asks the assembled Jews, and they make answer: "We have no King but Caesar." Then passed the sceptre from Judah finally and irrecoverably. Or rather, He who was condemned on that day to die on the Cross, the Son of David and of Judah, took up in the Cross itself, the sceptre of a new and spiritual Israel—"regnavit a ligno Deus." And they who disowned Him, who cried out, "Crucify Him," became wanderers on the face of the earth, still a people apart, but not a nation, and without self-ruling power. When they acknowledge Him for their King, then, but

not till then, shall the Kingdom be restored to Israel, and Israel, long wandering and lost, be restored to God.

He who stood before the tribunal of Pilate on that fateful day was known to the people as the Son of David. But when He asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" and they answered, "David's," He rejoined: "How, then, doth David in the spirit call Him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou at my right hand till I make thy enemies thy footstool.' If David call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. 22:42-45). And they could not answer Him. The answer is a mystery of faith. Jesus Christ is true God and true Man in one Divine Person; son of David by His mother, but without human father. "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," is the faith of the New Testament; for this is what Christ claimed to be, and by both miracle and prophecy proved Himself to be. He foretold clearly His death and His resurrection. He wrought signs such as no mere man could work. He walked upon the waters, and stilled the tempest. At His word or touch the sick rose from their beds, the halt sprang to their feet and walked, the blind saw, the dead were raised to life. To crown all, He Himself rose from the dead on the third day.

I say nothing of the life and teaching of Jesus, which accord so well with His own declaration that He came into the world from the Father. Enough that the Old Testament and the New, viewed as historical documents, point to Him as indeed the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Thus we are led by the light of reason and under its guidance to the threshold of the temple of faith. But reason itself can never enable us to enter. Divine Faith is a gift of God; it is not found in the conclusion of a syllogism. "If thou canst believe," said Christ to the father of the boy who had a dumb spirit, "all things are possible to him that believeth." And he said: "Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief" (Mark 9:22, 23). Such is the beginning of the prayer of faith. And such is the foundation of prayer.

We read in the "Life of Abraham Lincoln": "Belief in the existence of God, in the Bible, the revelation of God to man, in the efficacy and duty of prayer, in reverence toward the Almighty, and in love and charity to man, was the basis of his religion." And again: "Declarations of his trust in God and his belief in the efficacy of prayer pervade his State papers, letters and speeches" (Arnold's "Life of Abraham Lincoln," p. 477). Here

we have the guiding lights of a great leader of men, and the staff on which he leaned during a time of bitter trial such as the whole world is passing through to-day. I have outlined the rational grounds of our belief in the existence of God and His revelation to man. I will now deal with the duty and efficacy of prayer.

Duty is that which we owe—that which we ought to do. Man owes God the homage of prayer, the humble acknowledgment of his utter dependence on Him. "For piety," says Cicero, "is justice towards God." ("Est enim pietas justitia adversus deos." The plural "deos" is Cicero's concession to the polytheism of the day. He himself, as we have seen, believed in one God, Maker of heaven and earth, and of the spirit that is in man. (Cf. Tusc. Disput. loc. cit.). Man believes in justice. Though he may do unjustly, the sentiment of justice is deeply rooted in his mind and heart. It is justice, right, that is fought for in the World War which is raging to-day. Even our enemies, though deeply in the wrong, are, like the man in the parable, "wishful to justify" themselves. When the Pharisees and the Herodians asked the Master if it were lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, He bade them show Him the coin of the tribute, and remarking that it bore Caesar's image and superscription, said: "Render therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:14). The answer went to the root of the matter, beyond what they who sought it recked of. Men, made in God's own image and likeness, are loath to give to God that which is His. But it is a poor sort of justice that takes no account of Him. The man who fails to pray will not draw forth from his heart and render to God the coin of tribute which bears upon it His image and superscription.

Jesus Christ taught the duty, and indeed the necessity, of prayer by precept and example. He used to pass whole nights in prayer on the mountain alone. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, when His soul was sorrowful even unto death, and His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground. "And being in an agony, He prayed the longer" (Luke 22:43). He bade His disciples watch and pray lest they should enter into temptation, and Himself taught them to pray the great prayer of all Christians, the "Our Father." He pledged His word that if they asked the Father anything in His Name He would give it them. Lastly, He laid down the law of prayer in these words: "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find:

knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7).

Having the word of Christ that "we ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1), we need not greatly concern ourselves about the objections that are urged against prayer by unbelievers. Christians have been taunted since the present war broke out with praying on opposite sides, with conflicting intentions. As if the children of the same Father on falling out, may not together appeal to His tribunal! For the rest, we are so confident of being in the right, that it is as easy, as it is eminently proper, for us to pray that the right may prevail. If those who oppose us, and who are our enemies in this war, but brethren in Christ, pray only for victory, and not that the right may triumph, we are quite sure their prayer will not be heard. But if they, in good faith, believe they are in the right, and pray for the success of their cause, God will grant them, not indeed what they ask, but something better. For no prayer, said "in faith, not wavering" (James 1:6) is ever offered in vain.

It is sometimes said: "Where is the sense of making your needs known to God, when He knows them already?" This is wholly to misconceive the meaning and purpose of prayer. Of course God knows our needs beforehand, but it is not at all to make our needs known that we pray. We pray because He in His wisdom has seen fit to make prayer the condition of our getting what we ask. The law that He has laid down is: "Ask, and you shall receive." He had many good reasons for laying down this law, but even if we were not able to see one of them, we should still be bound to obey.

God will have every creature act according to its nature, and what more natural for the man who wants something than to go and ask for it of him who has it? Again, we owe God worship, and prayer is worship. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise always to God, that is to say, the fruit of lips confessing to His name" (Heb. 13:15). The very act and posture of prayer is an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God and a showing of reverence to Him.

But there is a deeper reason why we must pray. Prayer is the very breath of the spiritual life in man. Just as we know that the man who has ceased to breathe is dead, so we may know that the life of the soul is gone out of him who has ceased to pray. Only by faith and baptism can we get the spiritual life. Once gotten, it has to be kept up by prayer. Herbert Spencer has

defined life as "the continuous adjustment of internal relations with external relations," that is to say, an organism's correspondence with its environment, and this is a good definition of life in the concrete. The spiritual man, putting off the old man with his works and putting on the new, opens up a correspondence with a new environment, yea, with Life itself—with the Eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. What is prayer but the very act and exercise of this correspondence? If the correspondence cease, will not the life cease, too?

God is the sun of our souls. As the visible sun sheds its light and warmth, which are part and parcel of itself, upon the earth, and furnishes the things that live with the aliment of life, so God sheds His light and warmth upon the world of spirits, and makes them live. His Light is His Son, "the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9); His warmth is His Spirit, the living Love of the Father and the Son. God's light is knowledge, His warmth is love. But while the sun that shares its light and warmth with the visible world is itself far off in space, the Sun of our souls is not, as the Apostle tells us, "far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and are" (Acts 17:27.) We live in Him inasmuch as we know and love Him; He lives in us inasmuch as He knows and loves us; for mutual is the knowing and the loving in which the new life of God in us consists. And as the windows of a house are thrown open to admit freely the fresh air and the light; as the flower turns toward the sun and unfolds itself to the life-giving rays of that beneficent luminary, so must the windows of the soul be thrown open to admit the Light and Life of God; so must man turn to God in prayer if he would live.

Great and vital, then, is the need of prayer; as great its efficacy.

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of."

Over and over again in Holy Writ God pledges Himself to hear our prayers. "He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him" (Ps. 101:15). "Thou shalt pray to Him, and He will hear thee" (Job 22:27). "Cry to Me and I will hear thee" (Jer. 33:3). "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee" (Ps. 118:15). "As they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Is. 65:24). And Jesus Christ, in the New Covenant with men, gives His solemn assurance in comprehensive fashion thus: "All things whatsoever

you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you" (Mark 11:24).

How is it, then, that people sometimes ask and do not receive? It is because they ask not as they ought. "You ask and receive not," says St. James, "because you ask amiss (4:3). "Quia mala, quia mali, quia male;" thus tersely does St. Augustine sum up the reasons for us. We do not get what we ask in prayer, either because we do not ask for the right things, or because we ourselves are not right with God, or because we do not ask in the right way.

What, then, is the right thing to ask? The words of Christ, so broad and unrestricted, would seem to signify that anything whatever we ask we shall get. And He repeats the same in another and even more solemn way: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you" (John 16:23). But, as St. Augustine acutely observes, "Whatever is asked against salvation is not asked in the Saviour's name." "Seek ye first," says the Saviour Himself, "the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). "I shall be thy reward exceeding great," said God to Abraham. This, then, is what we must ask before all else—God Himself, the One Good in Whom are all good things. As for these other good things, the same Augustine wisely observes, in a certain epistle of his (130 al. 121, n. 12), "Whatever it is right to wish for, it is right to pray for." The needs of the life that now is we may confidently ask God to supply, but not what is superfluous. Whatever we can't take with us into eternity we pray for conditionally, but the things that endure—grace, truth, love, purity, justice, without condition.

And there is no good thing, temporal or spiritual, but we may hope to obtain by prayer. God says, "Whatever," and His word never fails. In sickness, temptation, trial, sorrow, we should have recourse to prayer. In time of war and world calamity, such as the present, we should pray the more. Anything that we really need, anything that the world stands in need of, we rightly pray for, even if the grant of it should involve, or appear to involve, interference with the course of nature. "My Father worketh until now, and I work" (John 5:17). He is behind the veil of nature, working always. "Elias was a man, mortal like unto us, and with faith he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth, and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again,

and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17, 18). "And the Lord said: If you had faith even as a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this mulberry tree, Be thou rooted up and transplanted into the sea, and it would obey you" (Luke 17:6).

God fulfils His purposes in many ways, and one of these is prayer. He has determined beforehand what He will do in the whole course of time. He wills not only the effects but the causes that are to produce them. And so His producing an effect, in answer to prayer, whether through natural agencies, or above and beyond and independently of them, involves in Him no change of purpose.

"We know," says the man cured of his blindness, "that God heareth not sinners" (John 9:31). What he means is that God does not use sinners to work miracles. The statement, taken as it stands, may be granted true of sinners as such, that is, of those who have no mind to give up their sin. And so, if a man is leading a life of sin, he must make up his mind to mend his ways before he can have any reason to hope that God will hear his prayer. St. Thomas of Aquino looks upon the saying of the man born blind as false in itself, and true only if a sinner should ask of God the means of committing sin. The wickedest man in the world, if he seek earnestly the means of saving his soul, will surely obtain it. It is not at all needful that we should have merited the graces we ask. Merit rests on justice, but prayer rests on grace. Of course, as I have already intimated, we cannot ask anything in the Saviour's name which God knows would prove hurtful to our souls. Hence, in asking for any temporal favour, such as success in our work, or even health, which is so great a boon, we must ever remember that God will not give it if He sees that His doing so would hinder rather than help us in attaining eternal happiness. Anything that is really for our good we shall get if we ask for it with faith, with humility, with attention, with perseverance. This is to ask aright.

First of all, we must have great confidence in God. "Let him ask in faith, not wavering," says St. James, "for he who wavers is like the wave of the sea that is carried about by the wind: let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (1:6, 7). And what motives have we for confidence! God is so good, so gracious, so ready to hear us, all-powerful to help us; faithful to His word; and His word is pledged. "If ye being evil know

how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? (Matt. 7:11). God condemned Dives to hell because he let Lazarus die of hunger at his gate. With how much confidence, then, should we not fall upon our knees and lift up hands of prayer at the Gate Beautiful of the House of Many Mansions, begging for the crumbs that fall from God's own table!

We must be attentive in prayer. If we do not ourselves attend to what we say, how can we expect God to attend to it? Prayer said with wilful distraction is worse than useless. "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man who tempteth God" (Eccli. 18:23). Due attention presupposes that we are very much in earnest, which we shall be in the measure that we feel how sorely we need the help of God. See how keen and eager is the pleading of the one who wants for bread! Such should be our pleading in prayer—keen and eager, and therefore attentive.

"Our prayer must be conceived and begotten in lowliness of heart. The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds" (Eccli. 35:21). And again: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (St. James 4:6; Prov. 3:34). It does not become beggars to be proud, and we are all of us beggars on the bounty of God. The Pharisee, in the parable, prayed aloud, while he cast a glance of scorn upon the poor Publican who stood afar off, striking his breast, and not daring as much as to lift up his eyes to Heaven. But the Master tells us that it was the latter who went down into his house justified rather than the former, "for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14).

Lastly, we must be "persevering in prayer" (Acts 1:14). We must "pray always, and faint not" (Luke 18:1). God has faithfully promised to hear us, but He has nowhere pledged Himself to grant our petition outright. We are told, for our example, of Jacob's wrestling with the angel in prayer the live-long night, of our Lord's passing whole nights in prayer on the mountain, of the Apostles and the Virgin Mary persevering in prayer. "Which of you," says our Lord Himself, "shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine is come to me from the way, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, the door is now

shut, and my little ones are with me in bed, I cannot rise to give thee? Yet, if he keep knocking, I say unto you, though he will not rise again and give him because he is his friend, because of his steadfastness in asking, he will rise and give him as many as he hath need of. And I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh getteth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke 11:5-11).

For whom should we pray? For all men. We are all brothers, all children of Adam, all children of the same "Father who is in Heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon good and bad, and raineth on the just and unjust" (Matt. 5:45). As Christians we should pray especially for our enemies; so Christ Himself has taught us by word and example: also, for those who are in high places. "I desire therefore," says the Apostle, "that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in high station, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all piety and chastity. For this is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

All true prayer must come from the heart. But we rightly distinguish between mental and vocal prayer. Mental prayer is what the term implies. It is a thinking on God and on the things of God. At least in some elementary form, it is not less needful to salvation than vocal prayer. Man is a thinking being, and in this is marked off from the lower animals, which have no power of thought. Man must set before himself the end which he seeks to gain, and take thought about the means of gaining it. If he fail to do so in this life's business he will never gain anything. How can it be otherwise in the great business of saving his soul?

"What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul?" This is the searching question which He who deigned to become and to be called the Son of Man puts to the sons of men. He puts it in terms of things they know so well—profit and loss; things that are ever on their lips, morning, noon and night, in the busy street, and in the market-place, in the highways and byways of life. "All the earth is made very desolate," says Jeremiah the prophet, "because there is no one that thinketh in his heart" (12:11). Why is it that men set so much store by the things of this world, and are so greedy of

them, but that they give so little thought to the things of the next? Why is it so many worship at the shrine of Mammon, but that they lose themselves in the things of time, heedless of "the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1)? Why is it so many give themselves over to the eager pursuit of worldly pleasures, and wander from the way of life, but that they think not, or think so seldom, of their last end? "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Eccli. 7:40).

Physical science is built up by observation and experiment. So, and not otherwise, is the science of prayer. It rests on the observation and experience of the best and noblest of our race, in their quest after communion of the soul with God. "Cuilibet in arte sua credendum est." For the things of any science we must go to those who are versed in it. In every age of the world there have been men and women deeply versed in the science of prayer. Heeding the invitation of God's Holy Spirit, they have "tasted and seen that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. 34:9). In this world itself there are good and sweet things. Infinitely better and sweeter than these is He who made them. We try to suck happiness from creatures, and they yield to us little. But if, mounting on wings of prayer, we first learn to soar above them and see them in the light of God, then, even as the bee from the flower, so we from these things of earth shall sip sweetness. And we shall find spacious fields for our souls to roam at large and feed in, there where

"Silently, one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven,
Blossom the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels."



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